

RURALREVIVE



Building a desert based economy - local, circular, inclusive and sustainable - one step at a time



Half time 2025

Taking stock & looking ahead

The first six months of 2025 has seen tangible progress for the RuralRevive Initiative. From fine-tuning waste management initiatives in Maltahöhe to scouting for a suitable recycling 'depot' in Mariental and actionable plans of going big in food production. It's still a long way to go, and we are getting there, despite the challenges faced when one wants to address issues at the core. With ongoing support from local farmers, small entrepreneurs and committed donors, we see our vision - of building a desert-based circular economy - coming to life, one step *and* project at a time. With our dedicated team, partners, donors and community support, we look forward to continuing this journey in the latter part of 2025 and beyond.

Thank you for being part of the RuralRevive Initiative, and enjoy our bi-annual update.

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Our cherished and adorable Cargo Donkey's 'Naartjie and Pampoen' - the official 'Mascots' and torch bearers of the 25 January 2025 Maltahöhe Clean-Up Competition - carried load upon load of trash - collected next to the roadside in the Village - to the recycling facility at Maraun's Garage. The real 'Hero' of this successful event, resulting in 1250 bags of trash removed from the streets (see page 3) - are some 300+ engaged residents who heeded the call to make Maltahöhe clean again.

This simple solution to collect recyclables from the roadsides in Maltahöhe could well prove to be 'the way' and inspire other villages in Namibia and Africa to follow suit. No need to surrender to the wave of trash.

2030 & Beyond – together we're in it for the long run

Once a thriving agricultural hub powered by the Karakul sheep industry, Maltahöhe faced decades of steady decline - with its buildings weathered, streets forgotten, and its spirit abandoned. And then, three years ago, something began to stir. In January 2022 the RuralRevive Initiative seed - potentially a powerful 'agent of change' - was planted. Today, that seed has grown into a flourishing young tree of hope. Its branches start to reach across the community, offering ownership, opportunity, pride, dignity and sustainability in the heart of the Namibian desert.

2025 - under the national theme "*Beyond 35: For a Prosperous Future*" - Namibia embraces renewal and progress, and so do we. As RuralRevive celebrates its third anniversary, we reflect on a journey that's been both bold, rooted, authentic and beautiful: empowering farmers, supporting entrepreneurs, restoring abandoned spaces, and nurturing a vibrant circular desert-based economy here in Maltahöhe.

This newsletter marks the second edition of 2025. We invite you into the heart of our story. It's a story of transformation of people and place – and one that continues to grow through community, collaboration, and shared purpose. With your continued support, we're building a sustainable future – and a living legacy.

Three years of RuralRevive!



Our 3rd birthday in January 2025 began with a heartfelt staff gathering at the 'Northern Campus (Horticulture)' one of our beautifully restored spaces – and a place that not too long ago was desolate and barren, marked by broken doors, cracked windows, and silence. Today, it stands transformed: warm, looked after, welcoming, embedded in food gardens and teeming with life.



Our dedicated laundry ladies set the scene, turning the space into a festive sanctuary and barbeque dinner venue for our 30+ team members. The joy and energy was electric as we celebrated how far we have come and the hands and hearts that made it possible.



Stefan (Advisor), Jimmy (Horticulture) and Reinhold (Project Coordinator) enjoying the birthday party and exchange with the team on the ground. Below are Cecilijah (Wolwedans Happiness Coordinator) and Enrico (Horticulturist RR) enjoying the party.



Embracing Woman Leadership

From the entire RuralRevive family, we extend our heartfelt congratulations to Her Excellency [President Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah](#) and Vice President [Lucia Witbooi](#) - a true daughter of the Hardap Region hailing from Gibeon, a neighbor to Maltahöhe - for taking the lead of our nation.

We also welcome our new [Governor Hon. Riaan McNab](#), of Hardap and look forward to his leadership and commitment to our Maltahöhe communities and development endeavours.

As we look towards a future of shared progress and national unity, we warmly invite you to visit the RuralRevive campus, to walk the paths we've rebuilt together, to meet the people shaping change, and to witness firsthand how local solutions are creating national impact. In a time when our President calls on all of us to move in one direction, our doors are open, and our work stands ready to inspire. Let's build the future.



EconoMix Feedback session

By January, four cohorts have been taken through the basics of business training, now even aided by video clips which were produced late 2024. With every cohort, valuable lessons are learnt; what works and what doesn't, helping us to tweak the framework which needs continuous updating as we go. The transition from being unemployed and hopeless to becoming a small entrepreneur, and sticking to it, is certainly not without challenges and teething problems.

Community members who received training share their personal experience with facilitator Antonia Ndumba and representatives from the Capricorn Foundation who co-funded the training programme.



Maraun's Garage was the centre of activities on the annual Clean-Up, with a mountain of trash collected and stacked in fodder bags - kindly donated by Christy van Wyk and Johnny Hanekom - growing by the hour. In charge of monitoring was Marika Raves (bottom), the key organiser of the event. From school kids to elders, over 300 residents participated, not to forget Naartjie & Pampoen

Maltahöhe Clean-Up 2025

January 25th was a day of unity, energy, and environmental action in Maltahöhe. Close to 300 community members, young and old came together with one shared goal: to clean up our town and reimagine waste as a treasure.



Armed with bags, gloves, and determination, volunteers cleared streets of waste and recyclables, most of which made their way to our new walk-in community waste management facility, where residents can now exchange recyclables for cash. Since its opening in August 2024, this facility has collected nearly 80,000 bottles, making a visible, positive impact on our environment.



Pampoen and Naartjie – two beloved donkeys and our newest “team members”, were the highlight of the day. Outfitted with custom recycling bags, they now roam the streets of Maltahöhe, helping to collect recyclables, and importantly transport the waste to Marains. In return for a good days work and numerous trips, they're fed lucern and fresh carrots from our garden - treated with love and given a safe home. In a region where donkeys are often overlooked and abused, they now represent a powerful symbol of care, renewal, and responsibility – for animals and people alike.



And in the background, our trusty Desert Runner zipped across town – delivering bags full of waste and transporting community members across town, keeping the clean-up alive and thriving. The Clean-Up is set to become an annual event - until clean streets devoid of trash - renders the event obsolete. That is the aim, and it can be done.

We would sincerely like to thank our sponsors for this successful event: Agra Limited | Woermann Brock We Care Trust | ProNamib | Capricorn Foundation | Wolwedans Foundation | Maltahöhe Hotel | African Marketing | Seapride & Suidevleis



The DesertRunner stopping at the junction where the C14 and C19 meet. A lonely man sits and waits for another day, potentially getting an idea how life for the rural community along the route (see right) - comprising lodge staff, farm workers, resettlement farmers and the like can change for the better, thanks to a scheduled and guaranteed bi-weekly transport at affordable rates. It is a start, and reminiscent of the old 'Posbus' (government post bus) doing the rounds in the rural areas.

DesertRunner Logistics

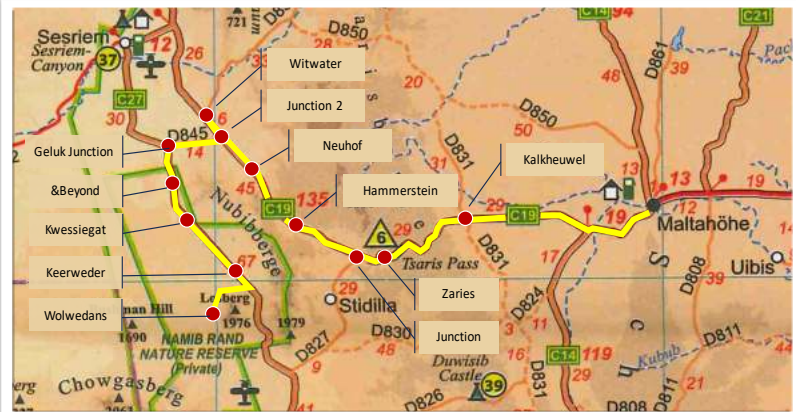
Connecting the dots

DesertRunner - a scheduled transport service connecting Maltahöhe with the lodges in the desert - forms part of the RuralRevive Initiative. It is the wheels which gets things moving and connecting the dots - all the way to Windhoek. DesertRunner is a non-profit venture which allows us to keep rates at cost price. For the pilot phase (July - December 2025) we will be using a Quantum to connect Maltahöhe with Windhoek twice a week, and a UD Hino Truck connecting Maltahöhe with Wolwedans via Hammerstein, Neuhof, Witwater and Geluk Junction twice a week. The DesertRunner is open for the public and all lodges en-route or beyond are encouraged to make use of it. Seats have to be booked in advance on a first come first serve basis. Confirmation will be sent by email, WhatsApp and/or sms.

Bookings

Sandra: 081-270 4799

email: desertrunner@ruralrevive.org



The DesertRunner Route from Maltahöhe to Wolwedans, going on Mondays and Thursdays (pm) and returning on Tuesdays and Fridays (am), connecting to Windhoek in the afternoon. On Wednesdays the truck will go from Maltahöhe to Mariental for the day (with a five hour lay-over). This scheduled service is available to residents from Maltahöhe to do their errands in town (doctor, bank, shopping) and even transport goods at a given rate per kg.



First Advisory Board Meeting

After our 3rd RuralRevive Anniversary, we hosted our very first Advisory Board meeting on the 24th of January which marked a significant step in shaping the future of RuralRevive and the Maltahöhe community. The day was filled with meaningful conversations and visionary planning, as board members, team leaders, and community voices came together to reflect on our progress and dream boldly about what comes next. We ended the day with a sundowner at our permaculture garden – where bees danced among the blossoms and the setting sun cast golden light across thriving plants. The food, proudly prepared by local hands, was fresh, flavourful, and deeply rooted in our community's spirit. It was a celebration not only of ideas, but of connection, collaboration, and shared purpose.



On our first birthday in Feb 2023 we planted a small tree on the RR Campus, next to the ironing room. To mark the occasion, Pastor Simon said a prayer and gave a moving and inspirational speech (see above). Three years later, this tree (see below) - which is now dedicated to Pastor Simon - has grown into a beautiful 'happy being' and is testament to the healthy energy surrounding Rural Revive. Left: Pastor Simon together with some Councillors and Sponsors (Marlize from Capricorn) and Youth at the 2025 Clean-up prize-giving. This must have been one of his last public appearances, and importantly, it was a happy one. Bottom: Visitors from WWF-Namibia, NACSO and METF (Ministry of Environment & Forestry), visiting RR in June for an informative visit and posing with Stephan (Initiator of the RuralRevive Initiative) under Pastor Simons tree.



In March 2025, we were saddened by the sudden passing of Pastor Neels Simon, a trusted and cherished patron of RuralRevive. Pastor Simon was not only a Counsellor to us but also a cherished friend, a powerful voice of encouragement, and a steadfast supporter of our project. He believed in our vision, championed our efforts, and celebrated our achievements as though they were his own. We knew him not only as a community leader but as our neighbor, too. Our campus stands just a block away from his former home, and many mornings began with the comforting sound of his voice – greeting passersby from his 'stoep' with a warm cup of coffee in hand and a hearty "Good morning." That voice became part of our daily rhythm, a symbol of kindness and connection. Pastor Simon often opened our events with a prayer – his words grounding us in purpose. He celebrated our milestones with pride, knowing that RuralRevive was a shared dream – one he believed in deeply and hoped to see flourish. May his memory be a blessing, and may his legacy inspire us all to carry forward his vision of hope, unity, and love.

RuralRevive Winter Cup 2025 – kick off with passion



A trophy worth fighting for. The winners of the RuralRevive 2025 Winter Cup - 'GoTsi !Go' - walked away with medals and a handsome NAD 25.000 in prize money. Runner-up /Gom/Gom took home NAD 12.500 and in third position 'Spoilers' received NAD 6750,-. Chairlady of the Village Council Elphina Magrietha Skrywer - dressed for the occasion - doing the prize giving. **Bottom:** the game is heating up during quarter and semi-finals and **bottom right** - the future of the cup. Young hopefuls using breaks between games and half-time to kick ball, with a classic home-made plastic bag ball. The talent is evident, and as the tournament grows into something big, so these boys will grow into young men and big soccer players.

28 June saw the kick-off to the first RuralRevive Winter Cup. With 24 registered teams and 20+ food stalls lining the field, the event attracted some 800 to 1000 enthusiastic fans and onlookers who braced the cold and added a festive spirit to the day. Two days of games and fun passed without incident, fights or injury and an elevated spirit amongst all present. The 2025 RuralRevive Winter Cup was a huge success and, no doubt, is here to stay and become an annual mark on the Maltahöhe calendar. Great lessons were learnt, as in how and what to improve next time round, and how to further fine-tune. Organisers, teams and residents look forward to 2026 and it will be exciting to see the tournament grow from strength to strength. Who knows - maybe one day the Cup will evolve into a regional league well beyond Maltahöhe and Daweb.

We would sincerely like to thank our sponsors for this successful event:

RuralRevive | ProNamib Nature Reserve | Ondili Collection | Wolwedans Foundation | Maltahöhe Hotel and OTB Sports

Project – Klein Kalkheuwel Regenerative Farm

Now neglected, 'Nothing' will organically have been revived into 'Something' here soon. Let's watch this space



Where today, lies a barren piece of land, abandoned and neglected, there will hopefully soon be green fields, life and commercial vegetable production. The first step is to secure the field with a game fence to keep out (remarkably) Kudu and other wild animals who would be all too happy to browse and feed in the garden. As much as we'd like to see fences go down for wildlife to roam free, this fence needs to be there...

During 2025/26 Wolwedans Desert Academy will expand its Horticulture training to Maltahöhe as part of the RuralRevive Project in order to scale the effort. The plan is to conduct all 1st year, Level 2 Training at Maltahöhe as of 2026 and then shift successful Level 3 trainees to a variety of 'small farms' and Wolwedans for job attachment. To this end, and in addition to Wolwedans Desert Academy, a new VTC - called Desert Academy Maltahöhe - will be established over the coming years.

A crop field of one hectare under irrigation is required by the NQA (Namibia Qualifications Authority) for both Desert Academy's to be accredited as VTC's. As such a 'field' can't be established at Wolwedans - located in the NamibRand Nature Reserve - and neither in Maltahöhe, therefore 'Klein Kalkheuwel' was identified as a potential site. The owner of Kalkheuwel – Vincent du Toit – is happy to lease 80 ha of land between the roads - to the Wolwedans Foundation on a five year term.



Kalkheuwel is located on the western 'Floere' some 50 km East of Maltahöhe and strategically positioned on the road from Maltahöhe to NamibRand/Wolwedans and Sossusvlei. It lies on the route of the DesertRunner, a scheduled transport service connecting the desert with Maltahöhe and, as of July 2025, passing through Kalkheuwel twice a week, making connectivity excellent.



The objective is to establish a larger scale garden (1 ha) to feed into "The Barn" trading hub and RuralRevive, and simultaneously be a practical training ground for job attachment for Level 3 Horticulture Trainees from Wolwedans and primarily Maltahöhe. Said garden will help to comply with Horticulture Certification of both Wolwedans Desert Academy and Maltahöhe Desert Academy.

Existing buildings will be fixed to accommodate some trainees (main house), a practical Facilitator and a care-taker (out-building) who stays permanently.



Die Floere

Apart from the unique "Sandhof Lillies", Daweb holds another little known secret: abundant water reserves underneath the so-called "Floere" west of Maltahöhe. Immense amounts of underground water have been utilised in the past but in the end, it seems markets (central Namibia essentially or the coast) for vegetable and fruit were just too far away. And so it was lucern and later - nothing - bar some subsistence farming. This is about to change as markets open (the lodges) and 'farm to plate' becomes trendy. A second lease on life for the 'Floere'?

Top: The field in July 2025, waiting to be revived, step one being to game-proof. Bottom: fence taking shape | a plain hole in the ground is the basis of everything. This is the primary borehole. Kalkheuwel boasts three boreholes, one with a windmill and two which have to be equipped with solar pumps to provide sufficient quantities of water for irrigation | nature taking over in reservoir.

The following infrastructure developments will happen over the next 12 months

1. Water infrastructure comprising solar driven submersible pumps, water tanks, booster pumps and irrigation infrastructure
2. Grey water system, with overflow water utilised to water trees and hedges
3. Game fencing around 1 ha crop field, to protect crop from wildlife
4. Basic renovation of all buildings to make them fit for accommodating trainees (4-6 at a time) and one facilitator/gardener. As the lease is limited not too much will be added which is nice as the quirky character of Kalkheuwel would be maintained.
5. Small solar energy system to power the whole set-up
6. Rehabilitation of dump-site and establishment of recycling system and waste management, so all waste is going to Maltahöhe for recycling (85%).

Open Market

Whilst not yet the big buzz initiators and vendors would like to see, the Open Market is there to stay. Ultimately - once 'The Barn' has moved to the old PEP stores - it will organically evolve into a weekly trading hub. For the remainder of 2025 it is a monthly affair, open to anybody who has vegetables, fruit, value add products and handicraft items to sell. Visitors from Windhoek never miss the opportunity to take some goodies home with them.



RR inspiring a new way

Exploratory Field Visit for Tourism Development Assessment

Late June we received a visit by a delegation comprising representatives from some NGO's and government. The aim was to find inspiration and ideas both in Maltahöhe and Wolwedans for the 'Namibia for Life Project - Finance for Permanence' Programme.

The Namibia for Life initiative is a long-term conservation finance mechanism being developed under the Project Finance for Permanence model, with leadership from WWF and national partners including NACSO and the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism. Its goal is to secure permanent financial sustainability for Namibia's Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) Program, which are critical to both biodiversity conservation and the livelihoods of rural communities. The PFP model brings together upfront capital commitments from public and private funders and ties disbursement to achieving clearly defined milestones. In Namibia, the focus is on securing long-term funding for 86 registered conservancies covering over 20% of the country's land area. Namibia for Life aims to become a flagship African conservation finance platform, supporting both ecological resilience and inclusive economic development.



Left to Right: Piet Bamm (Project Manager RR), Martha Talamondjila Naanda (WWF), Stephan Brückner (RR Initiator), Maxi Louis (NACSO), Uanao Katjinjaa and Frieda Nyau (both NACSO), Deborah Lilienfeld (WWF/US) and kneeling - Mr. Tashiva (METF Mariental), Hendrika Apollus (WWF)

The purpose of the exploratory mission was to learn about the origination of the Hub concept, i.e. how it was initiated, stakeholders and or partners involved, how it is being operated, managed, who was/is part of that process (pre and post establishment) and what was the main aim/objective of its establishment.

The delegation left inspired and perhaps fell in love with Maltahöhe a bit.



A happy sight for Maltahöhe

After doubts and worries well into March, in the end all turned out to be fine, with Maltahöhe and surrounding farmland being blessed with abundant rains in late March and April. The transformation of the land from barren drought-stricken rocky terrain to grass covered pastures is once again nothing but a miracle. And a good omen for the remainder of the year and the future of RuralRevive and the well-being of the people.

Top: The Hudup River in full flood, for days on end.

Right from top to bottom: Members of the Capricorn Foundation - our main sponsors in the waste related field - observe the progress in April. If all goes well the facility can be expanded during the latter half of 2025.

2nd row: Vendors deliver bottles and cans - that are counted and weighed - and collect their reward. It's not much, it's enough though to make a small difference in their families' lives, and keep the streets clean.

Bottom: A new storage facility for full recycling bags, now kept out of the sun | a shade net was finally put up on the border fence of the recycling plant, hiding the constructive and positive mess from our neighbours' view | Waste-collection the creative RuralRevive Way.



Recycling News

Trash is Treasure in Maltahöhe and since we started in October 2024 almost 100.000 empty wine and beer bottles have been collected from the streets for re-use. Collectors are rewarded with cash for every bottle brought. What these modern day hero's are doing isn't just a way to take charge of their own destiny and earn some income to make ends meet (a very practical consideration) it's also sustainability and resilience at its best. Not to mention cultivating a cleaner environment.



From the garden



Top: The completed south section in full production.
Above: Construction of northern section of the garden, including toilets, storage and a prep kitchen is under way and should be done by end 2025. All rock taken out to dig foundations is put back into the bottom of planters to reduce sand needed.
Left: View from the East. *Right:* David Nuyoma (CEO Capricorn Group) and Gerhard Fourie (Chairman of the Capricorn Group and Foundation) being shown around by Jimmy Bassingthwaighe, in charge of Horticulture at RR. *Bottom:* Healthy harvest from the organic garden is sold to lodges in the Namib. Farm to plate at work.



Thank you



No matter from which side you look, Maltahöhe has a charming side too, best to be experienced when one actually spends the night, diving into the small country town vibe. So what are you waiting for? Next trip spend some time and stop over for a night en-route to the Namib.

We are excited, happy, honoured and genuinely grateful for two of our institutional partners having committed to support RuralRevive for a second round of funding. The [Julius Bär Foundation](#) from Switzerland committed Christmas 2024, and the [Capricorn Foundation](#) gave us a solid “yes, count us in - for the longrun” mid 2025. Capricorn’s focus will be to co-fund Waste Management / Recycling and Horticulture in its diverse facets, whilst Julius Bär is seed funding (essentially subsidising) the DesertRunner operations for six months until it reaches break even, Horticulture operations in general, completion of ‘The Barn’ Trading Hub as well as overall project management incl. monitoring and reporting. Our three year service level agreement with the SSC-DF ([Social Security Development Fund](#)) is due for final evaluation and close-out report during July and we are hopeful - once round one is done and dusted and results impress - that the SSC-DF will feel encouraged to come on board for a second round too, likely in the vocational training realm - in the form of bursaries to marginalised people from the Hardap region and beyond.

The [Wolwedans Foundation](#) remains committed to match-fund the initiative, with special focus on securing and renovating infrastructures for Waste/Recycling, Horticulture and Vocational Training work packages.

Thank you - from all people involved and benefitting from RuralRevive - to our four key partners. Without your commitment and trust, this wonderful undertaking would not have been possible. The foundation has been laid and it is time to reach out and widen the network, including building a strong customer base to make RR self-sustainable in the long run. Whilst [RuralRevive - Building a Desert Based Economy](#) was conceptualised and implemented by the Wolwedans Foundation, the time has come to open the platform to additional players, both drivers of projects as well as additional partners and donors.



Julius Bär
FOUNDATION



Wolwedans
FOUNDATION

In addition to the four anchor donors, we would also like to thank all sponsors for various events like the Maltahöhe Clean-Up Competition (see bottom page 3), RuralRevive Winter Cup 2025 (see bottom page 6), farmers Christie v.d. Merwe and Johnny Hanekom for the empty fodder bags needed to collect and store the waste during the clean-up, and anybody out there who lent a hand and/or heart, or an ear, availed transport or equipment, advice, guidance, good vibes and moral support. Thank you all and let's keep the connection and revive Maltahöhe together.

RuralRevive is all about people and their wellbeing – some impressions



Top row: Farmer Alfred from Mara North | a flower next to the field | colleagues from the Capricorn Foundation on a field trip to smallholder farms, here with Mr Katjikuru (left) from Halifax and Jimmy, with Oupa Gustav Hanse looking on. *Second row:* Wilma Garises (RR Waste) and Veripura Muukua from Capricorn touring the yard | Bianca from the laundry taking a break | unknown HappyBeing | Marika Raves at the Waste Competition prize giving. *Third row:* Scenes from beside the soccer field: Lines men ready for action | Helena, Ester and Ashley selling Wolwedans pork chops | our unknown HERO of the tournament, voluntarily commentating the games from morning till late | Happy Vendor doing Donkey Braai. *4th row:* Jimmy and Johnny inspecting progress at Kalkheuwel | Our Capricorn colleagues and Advisory Board members | Willem Papier, in charge of the yard. *Bottom:* CargoDonkey Pampoen & his caring Master Ernst | Johnny (Draadcamper) Mallet at Kalkheuwel | Foxy Youth, the future of RR | Freshly baked bread at the Puma Service | Wolwedans CEO/Captain Stephan happy & thrilled with the 'slim plan' he picked up in Lamu/Kenya (not the donkey, the idea ;-).